Chief Reader Report on Student Responses:

2025 AP® Seminar Set 1

Free-Response Questions

- Number of Students Scored 130,723
- Number of Readers 2079
- Score Distribution

Exam Score	N	%At
5	11,978	9.2
4	24,271	18.6
3	71,732	54.9
2	16,725	12.8
1	6,017	4.6

- Global Mean 3.15

The following comments on the 2025 free-response questions for AP® Seminar were written by the Chief Reader, David Swerdlow, Professor of English, Westminster College, New Wilmington, PA. They give an overview of each free-response question and of how students performed on the question, including typical student errors. General comments regarding the skills and content that students frequently have the most problems with are included. Some suggestions for improving student preparation in these areas are also provided. Teachers are encouraged to attend a College Board workshop to learn strategies for improving student performance in specific areas.

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Individual Research Report (IRR)

Task: Identify an academic or real-world problem or issue, investigate a range of perspectives on the problem or issue, identify and analyze a variety of credible sources, synthesize the perspectives from those sources, and write an analytical research report on what experts say about the issue.
Topic: Student choice (individual contribution to a team project).

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Understand and Analyze Context	6	4.22
Understand and Analyze Argument	6	4.15
Evaluate Sources and Evidence	6	3.96
Understand and Analyze Perspective	6	3.95
Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution)	3	2.17
Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style)	3	2.33

Overall Mean Score: 20.79

What were the responses to this task expected to demonstrate?

This task assessed the individual student's ability to:

- Investigate a particular lens, approach or range of perspectives on the research topic (selected by a student team).
- Conduct scholarly research relevant to the topic.
- Produce an evaluative report on the research conducted, analyzing the reasoning within the sources as well as the relevance and credibility of evidence used in those sources.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:	*Responses that Demonstrated Understanding:*
Understand and Analyze Context	
• Selected a topic too broad or too narrow to achieve research depth. • Failed to place the issue in context and explain why the issue mattered. • Drew mainly from one or two sources or sources not appropriate for an academic report.	• Selected a clearly defined and researchable topic. • Clearly described why and how the issue was important; included a title that gave the reader an entrée into the topic. • Drew upon a wide variety of academically appropriate sources. • Established context based on the sources that were actually used in the report.

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Understand and Analyze Argument	
• Summarized source material rather than explaining the sources' arguments. • Did not anchor ideas to sources. • Made no distinction between paraphrased material and the response's commentary. • Excessively quoted information from sources without commentary, reflecting limited student understanding of the material.	• Directly explained the authors' reasoning, claims, or conclusion. • Clearly attributed the source material, so that readers can always tell what comes from what source. • Demonstrated clear understanding of the reasoning and validity of the sources' arguments, allowing concise and insightful commentary anchored in the source.
Evaluate Sources and Evidence	
• Conducted superficial research, relying on general websites or general reference sources. • Drew upon outdated research without providing a rationale for using that older evidence. • Ignored the sources, substituting the student's own opinion about the research topic, often repeating the general thesis or topic without elaboration, or reducing a complex argument to an oversimplified generalization. • Evaluated evidence superficially without regard to source, treating all sources as equal in quality and relevance. • Used material from second-hand sources quoted in text.	• Used a variety of credible, well-vetted sources, including peer-reviewed materials; selected timely sources indicating an awareness of current scholarly discourse. • Evaluated evidence purposively or explained with attributive tags to bolster credibility and relevance. • Tracked down second-hand information from sources to verify credibility and relevance.
Understand and Analyze Perspective	
• Identified information from sources but not points of view as conveyed through arguments. • Included vaguely attributed perspectives that are not tied to sources. • Failed to recognize the perspectives of each source, often simply summarizing each one. • Isolated perspectives from one another rather than making connections between them.	• Consistently included clear attribution or citation linking perspectives to sources. • Explained specific relationships or connections among perspectives.

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Apply Conventions: Citation and Attribution	
• Inadequately attributed material overall or failed to signal a paraphrase. • Neglected to link in-text citations to the bibliography/works cited. • Relied heavily on URLs as citations and/or confused the tool used to locate the source (e.g., EBSCO) with the source itself (e.g., JAMA). • Failed to make certain that all elements were contained in the bibliography/works cited. • Demonstrated no organizational principle in the bibliography.	• Appropriately attributed all sources referenced, making clear the type of source used. • Made certain that in-text citations were listed in the bibliography/works cited and vice versa, ensuring that all sources in the bibliography/works cited aligned with the in-text citations. • Provided all required elements of citations. • Used a consistent style to reference sources.
Apply Conventions: Grammar and Style	
• Relied on simplistic language and an overall style that was not appropriate for an academic report. • Contained many errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar, making the paper difficult to read. • Lapsed into colloquial language. • Provided too few sentences to distinguish between student's own writing and paraphrasing from sources.	• Utilized an academic writing voice able to convey complex ideas. • Proofread to correct errors in spelling, syntax, and grammar.

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Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the IRR?

- Discuss different types of sources (books, articles, journalistic pieces) to help students understand what kinds of sources are important and credible in a research project.
- Have conversations with students about the difference between a lens (a filter through which a topic can be viewed) and perspective (a point of view conveyed through a source's argument).
- Have students practice putting two sources in dialogue with each other in a written paragraph.
- Focus on the use of transitions/transitional language to facilitate conversations between and among sources.
- Ask students to look at a reference page as a collection of authoritative voices on a topic.
- Provide examples of including an up-to-date reference in the introduction for appropriate contextualization.
- Ask students to include peer-reviewed academic sources—and engage the nuances of them (rather than merely "translating" them to general language as a journalist would).
- Teach students to evaluate sources used within the research they are reviewing.
- Practice reading academic sources and tracing a line of argument; introduce academic conventions.
- Have students teach the findings of their IRR to each other before planning their team presentation.
- Remind students to use precise language throughout the report.
- Urge students to use citations from the moment they begin to write to ensure the correct linking of sources and in-text citations.
- Remind students to check for all elements in a citation that allow a reader to instantly discern the type of source and quality of sources being used.
- Remind students to check the in-text citations they have used against their reference page.
- Remind students to clearly signal when paraphrased material begins and ends (usually through attributive tags to begin and parentheticals to end).
- Remind students to review their Turnitin report as an opportunity to refine their paraphrasing and citation skills.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the skills required in this task?

- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model what high-scoring responses look like (and show common errors).
- Use the online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and demonstrate the requirements of the rubric.
- Use the AP Daily videos in AP Classroom (e.g., Performance Task 1 Videos 4, 5, and 6 to help with process; UAP videos for perspectives; ESE and SUE videos for finding and selecting relevant and credible evidence).
- Have students read high-scoring AP Research lit reviews to learn the difference between a report that simply stacks data and quotes on top of each other and a report that puts what experts are saying in conversation with one another.
- Use the rubric consistently and frequently. Have students use the language of the rubric in self and peer assessments.
- Use sentence frames/templates, especially for students new to AP, to give them examples of how connections between sources can be made.

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Individual Written Argument (IWA)

Task: Write a 2000-word, evidence-based argument.
Topic: Research and Synthesis based on stimulus material.

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Understand and Analyze Context (Stimulus)	5	3.02
Understand and Analyze Context	5	3.27
Understand and Analyze Perspective	9	5.22
Establish Argument	12	7.09
Select and Use Evidence	9	5.52
Apply Conventions (Citation and Attribution)	5	3.11
Apply Conventions (Grammar and Style)	3	2.11

Overall Mean Score: 29.35

What were the responses to this task expected to demonstrate?

This task assessed the individual student's ability to:

- Review a set of stimulus materials and decide on a theme derived from at least two of the sources.
- Formulate a research question directly related to that theme.
- Conduct research and evaluate relevant, credible, and scholarly materials to answer the research question.
- Formulate a well-reasoned argument with a clear line of reasoning and a plausible conclusion.
- Evaluate and acknowledge counterarguments and different perspectives.
- Write a 2,000-word argument that is logically organized and supported by credible evidence.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge were seen in the responses to this question?

Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding:*
Choice of Topic	
• Adopted a topic already presented in one of the stimulus sources that effectively turned the response into a summary/report instead of an argument. • Selected a topic from one stimulus source that is not covered or discussed in another source, which failed to highlight a theme that connects at least two sources. • Recycled or repurposed papers written for other courses or assignments. These may be "practice tasks" completed earlier in the year that are accidentally uploaded.	• Developed a research question closely linked to the 2025 stimulus materials, allowing those documents to inspire genuine curiosity and demonstrating student engagement as well as the skill of synthesis. • Discovered themes that were clearly rooted in at least two texts in the stimulus packet, including topics outside of the overarching theme of "memory/nostalgia."

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• Shoe-horned a reference from the stimulus materials–often via an out-of-context quote–where stimulus materials were clearly not related to the central focus of the paper. Sources such as the Norberg piece on False Nostalgia and the Binney article were often used this way.	• Clearly established the significance of the stimulus materials to the research question/argument by placing it in context with specific details.
Use of Stimulus Materials	
• Used stimulus materials from a previous year. • Utilized stimulus materials as contrived jumping-off points, mentioning them only cursorily or in discussions that did not connect the materials to the argument. This was most commonly done by mentioning the Seth Lawless photographs as a way to express nostalgia. • Omitted any reference to stimulus materials. • Used a stimulus source for a definition or fact that could be more easily obtained from other, more relevant sources. • Misinterpreted or misrepresented the content or context of a stimulus source. For example, referencing the Powell piece about his memories of Memorial Day traditions to be solely about war.	• Contextualized the stimulus document accurately. • Integrated details from the stimulus materials, being explicit about the relevance of that information to the question and the ensuing argument. • Chose an area of inquiry that was clearly thematically rooted in two or more documents in the stimulus packet, enabling more authentic use in the essay. • Connected vital evidence from a stimulus document to credible evidence from other sources (comparing/contrasting perspectives).
Development of Research Question (Context)	
• Provided a broad research question or thesis that oversimplified perspectives, claims, or conclusions. • Asked more than one question or broached multiple topics. • Failed to situate the topic, problem, issue, or concern in a particular time or place. For example, “Why are memories important?” as opposed to “How is nostalgia leveraged in the US to influence consumer behavior?” • Failed to convey the urgency or impact of the question in relation to why the topic matters or who will be affected (e.g., “memory is important” or “Alzheimer’s is hard”).	• Chose a relevant area of inquiry, typically situated in time and place, which was narrow enough to explore and develop well-defined perspectives. • Made the research question and/or thesis explicit, so the reader did not have to guess at the writer’s intention or position. • Provided specific and relevant details (data, metrics, statistics) related to particular groups of people in defined spaces or with distinct backgrounds at a precise moment in time/history to convey why the research question matters.

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• Asked a question that is closed, irrelevant, or superfluous and does not invite debate, leading to a strawman fallacy, an invalid claim, or a spurious argument.	
Evaluation of Multiple Perspectives	
• Failed to address or explore opposing, competing, or alternative perspectives. Each example or reference repeats the same position or "piles on" another reason the topic matters. • Compared perspectives within broad generalities, merely highlighting agreement or disagreement ("so and so concurs" or "some people disagree") without providing analysis or clear attribution to identify the perspectives. • Conflated lenses and stakeholders with perspectives, failing to root a perspective in an authoritative or critical source. • Chose lenses or perspectives irrelevant to or unsuitable for the subject matter. Often these are conveyed through a writer's personal feelings on the subject. • Assumed all stakeholders share the same perspective (e.g., "all caregivers agree on this topic").	• Explored a full spectrum of perspectives to reveal the complexity of an issue. • Employed connective tissue–transitional words or phrases–to explicitly describe the relationship between perspectives. • Elaborated on the connections between perspectives by evaluating distinct points of emphasis, implications, limitations, influences, potential biases, etc. • Revealed a clear understanding of the difference between a lens (a filter through which to consider an issue) and a perspective (a point of view conveyed through an argument). • Avoided placing perspectives into separate silos– often displayed by subtopics/subheadings–that isolate perspectives from one another. • Linked perspectives to credible, relevant sources with clear attribution or citation.
Development of Line of Reasoning	
• Lacked the necessary components to establish an argument, such as a clear question or thesis, reasons, supporting evidence, consideration of counterargument(s), conclusion, etc. • Lacked a clear position or arrived at conclusions that merely summarized sources, failed to align with the research question, or collected evidence that did not support the position or the argument. • Developed a weak or flawed line of reasoning consisting of illogical connections between claims and/or ignored obvious and clear counterpoints to claims. • Obscured the line of reasoning through organizational missteps or poor formatting choices.	• Revealed the links between supporting evidence and claims by providing clarifying and accurate commentary that engaged important details. • Articulated an educated and informed position that featured a clear student voice to drive the argument. • Presented a clear line of reasoning, explaining links between claims and evidence that could be easily tracked because the composition was well-organized. • Offered a plausible, intuitive, and well-supported solution (if a problem-solution paper) that acknowledges objections, implications, and/or limitations.

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• Arrived at an underdeveloped conclusion due to repetition of the same claim throughout the response. • Failed to establish or recognize whether the topic/question will require a solution or a verdict/resolution at the conclusion of the response.	• Offered a plausible, intuitive, and well-reasoned conclusion (if a position paper).
Selection and Use of Evidence	
• Selected evidence primarily from news organizations, popular magazines, blogs, online encyclopedic sources, or social media sites. • Treated all evidence as equal in relevance or credibility without presenting attributive commentary that might justify the inclusion of less reputable sources. • Relied on a limited number of sources (often featuring one or two throughout the entirety of the paper) to support its position or to provide evidence. • Used sources that were outdated for contemporary topics without justification (e.g., relying on sources from the 1990s to make a point about current health policies). • Provided reputable and valid sources without demonstrating accurate or full understanding of them. • Introduced ideas or concepts from sources that are too shallow to be effective, suggesting the writer read little more than the abstract or the first paragraph.	• Used a variety of well-vetted sources, including peer-reviewed journals and other academic sources. • Provided commentary to explain the relevance and credibility of a source through in-text attribution, but only when necessary (rather than with every use of evidence). • Used references and sources to establish perspectives. • Selected secondary and tertiary sources for additional support of the most vital claims.

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Applying Conventions: Citation and Attribution	
• Attributed source material in-text without an accompanying bibliographic entry and/or included sources in the bibliography not found in the text. • Applied inconsistent or inexact attributive phrasing or parenthetical citations that are misaligned with the bibliography/works cited, requiring the reader to search for the source (for example, using an article title in the response and beginning a bibliographic entry with author's name). • Provided citations with missing or inconsistent elements (examples could be utilizing only a URL or supplying the year of publication sporadically throughout the list of references).	• Ensured that all sources, including stimulus sources, were accurately listed in the bibliography/works cited. • Consistently and accurately matched attributions or parenthetical citations in the body of the response to the bibliography/works cited. • Applied an academically accepted citation style consistently, including all essential elements. • Formatted both in-text citations and bibliography entries clearly.
Applying Conventions: Grammar and Style	
• Used a colloquial or casual tone featuring inconsistent point of view, contractions, slang, or abrupt stylistic changes. • Employed language, vocabulary, or composition so dense that the paper becomes incoherent (i.e., student avidly using a thesaurus that complicates the writing and communicates poorly). • Obscured ideas through limited or incorrect vocabulary and/or by making cumbersome syntactical decisions. • Included numerous, glaring grammatical errors such as comma splices, fragments, spelling errors/typos, incorrect punctuation, etc., such that the response is difficult to read without some guesswork on the part of the reader.	• Maintained an academic and stylistically appropriate voice throughout the entire response. • Employed varied sentence structure, accurate syntax, and clear diction to convey clear messaging of ideas. • Provided a clearly organized composition with minimal grammatical errors that would otherwise stunt, inhibit, or limit understanding.

Based on your experience at the AP® Reading with student responses, what advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on the IWA?

- Practice reading and annotating college-level texts, identifying the argument and the line of reasoning, evaluating the supporting evidence, and challenging/evaluating the solutions or verdicts offered.
- Talk explicitly and often about how to integrate stimulus materials and draw themes from two or more texts. Begin with acknowledging the obvious, low-hanging fruit and then push students to seek less-obvious connections. Evaluate these newer, more subtle ideas collectively to determine their accuracy or legitimacy.

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- Highlight the importance of topical relevance. Require students to validate their idea–to convince others that it matters–by contextualizing sources, evidence, data, or information in order to frame their argument effectively.
- Practice writing commentary about sources with strong, clear attribution phrases; use the commentary to establish links between sources.
- Demonstrate the importance of a good research question (open, relevant, debatable, researchable, etc.) and how to use that question to drive their argument in the form of a strong thesis statement that serves as an anchor throughout the response.
- Remind students how this task differs from the IRR completed earlier: the IRR uses research to report on, explain, and offer information about a topic; the IWA uses research to contextualize a topic, defend a position, support an argument, illuminate a perspective, etc.
- Use various strategies such as peer review or oral defense questioning to help students make certain that they are sustaining an argument and using evidence to support that argument; peer review can also be used to ensure that students have adopted an academic voice.
- Explore academic integrity and professional ethics as it relates to plagiarism. With the advent of language model AI technology and dependent on school policy, demonstrate effective and responsible use of AI within research and information gathering.
- As a matter of academic integrity, remind students that they cannot repurpose papers from other classes, even if the writing is their own. Point out that such papers are typically easy to spot since the concepts or topics within the stimulus materials are specifically selected to highlight a central theme chosen by the development committee.
- Remind students to double-check that their upload to the Digital Portfolio is the correct file in the correct place. Also, teachers should check to ensure students are submitting legitimate responses and not practice tasks from earlier in the year or semester.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare their students for the skills required in this task?

- Work through student samples on AP Central, which serve as models of what a high scoring response typically contains.
- Use resources on the AP Seminar Teacher Community site that offer different strategies and materials proven to engage students as well as introduce them to the stimulus materials.
- Provide college-level reading assignments, studies, essays, papers, etc., to broaden students' horizons and to adequately prepare them for the reading they will do on their own as they prepare to write their response.
- Have daily conversations about relevant topics and cultural issues. Model how to consider perspectives and how to formulate cogent claims throughout the ensuing dialogue.
- Use optional online modules to help clarify requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily videos in AP Classroom (e.g., Performance Task 2 videos 1 through 14, UAP videos for perspectives, ESE and SUE videos for finding and selecting relevant and credible evidence, ESA videos for building arguments).

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End-of-Course Exam, Part A

Task: Respond to three short-answer prompts.
Topic: Evaluate a short text, identifying the argument, line of reasoning, and effectiveness of evidence.

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Understand and Analyze Argument	3	1.99
Understand and Analyze Argument	6	4.09
Evaluate Sources and Evidence	6	4.09
Overall Mean Score: 10.19		

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This task asked students to read and understand an argument, identify the line of reasoning and evaluate the credibility and relevance of the evidence advanced by the author in support of that argument.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in skills were seen in the responses to this question?

Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:	*Responses that Demonstrate Understanding:*
Identifying Argument	
• Identified only part of an argument, rather than all of its components (e.g., "Paid parental leave should be implemented in the U.S."). • Identified the main argument in vague or overgeneralized terms (e.g., "The author argues that paid leave is important for families"). • Confused claims with the main argument (e.g., "Resources and time for families after childbirth really matter"). • Misstated the main idea directly (e.g., "Unpaid leave is effective for workers after giving birth"). • Utilized the title or heading in lieu of articulating the main argument ("There is an urgent need for paid parental leave"). • Only identified the part of the main argument that was accessible from the title alone (e.g. "Paid parental leave is important and necessary").	• Translated the author's argument into the student's own words. • Identified all main components of the argument: 1) America should have paid parental leave; 2) Current unpaid leave policies disadvantage some groups; 3) Paid parental leave has benefits for the mother, father, child, and/or family. • Incorporated details critical to the argument (e.g., "The author's main argument is that the current policy of unpaid leave under FMLA disadvantages various groups. To alleviate the financial stress associated with unpaid leave, America should offer paid parental leave because of the mental and physical benefits it offers from the mother, father, and child").

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Explaining Line of Reasoning	
• Misidentified claims, often confusing support for the claim (evidence) with the claim itself (e.g., "Research shows a '51% decrease in the risk of rehospitalization'"). • Summarized the argument or provided a bulleted list of claims without any connective language. • Asserted that claims were linked without explanation or attempted to link claims using illogical or circular reasoning. • Linked claims to personal opinions not contained in author's argument. • Failed to note how counterclaims were addressed by author. • Focused entirely on connecting claims to evidence rather than to other claims or to the main argument (e.g., "The author follows up this claim with evidence"). • Used the term "line of reasoning" in a way that showed misunderstanding of the concept. • Relied primarily on sequential language to connect the claims (e.g., "first," "then," "finally"). • Counted paragraphs and referred to claims by their numbered paragraph rather than identifying claims in the response.	• Accurately identified specific claims. • Contextualized and explained connections between the claims used to build an argument. • Explained how the claims and line of reasoning were organized to build the author's argument. • Were often organized by paragraphs, grouped according to central points of argument. • Identified counterarguments presented by the author. • Recognized how the argument considered various stakeholders and perspectives in the line of reasoning (e.g., "These three main groups of claims that cover the benefits of paid leave to children, mothers, and fathers, all work together to build her central argument of having paid leave"). • Reflected a thorough understanding of how the author constructed the argument and why it was important.
Evaluating Evidence	
• Referenced evidence without evaluating whether that evidence supported a particular claim or the overall argument. • Evaluated the credibility of sources without evaluating the actual evidence. • Conflated claims with evidence. • Focused only on credentials of the source or professional affiliations without explaining the relation to the topic of the prompt.	• Identified specific evidence used to support a claim. • Explained both the credibility and relevance of specific pieces of evidence (e.g., "By citing statstics from a report from a national agency, the author establishes the reliability of her source. The agency being the Bureau of Labor is relevant to the topic at hand as the author's claim is about unpaid leave in working families. The evidence is also relevant to the claim as the evidence shows how white parents, despite also not being very eligible for parental leave, are around 25% more eligiable than hispanic families.").

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• Merely asserted evidence as credible or relevant without explaining how the evidence supported or failed to support the claims (e.g, "Some sources were credible based on the experts quoted, but other pieces of evidence did not have a source."). • Referred to annotated evidence and claims that are not written in the response ("The first piece of evidence supports claim 2…").	• Assessed how the evidence strongly or weakly supported a claim. • Linked evaluation of the evidence back to the author's overall argument.

What advice would you offer teachers to help them improve student performance on Part A of the Exam?

- Remind students that each prompt asks for distinct information. Train students not to overlap these components in their answers:
    - Question 1 should only contain the main ideas of the article. Have students think about the author's intentions for writing the article and what they are arguing for.
    - Question 2 is about the author's choices regarding the organization of the article. Students should address why the author begins with a specific claim and how the organization of the following claims leads the reader through the argument. Students should not evaluate the evidence that supports those claims in their responses to this question.
    - Question 3 requires an evaluation of the quality of the evidence. Students need to practice evaluating at least two separate pieces of evidence for this row. They need to offer a discussion about both the source AND specific evidence from those sources, considering the source's credibility and the evidence's relevance.
- Teach students the difference between the tasks for each question by looking at the verbs "identify" (Question 1), "explain" (Question 2), and "evaluate" (Question 3).
- Remind students that complex arguments often have multiple components and that they are not always expressly stated at the outset.
- Introduce students to the general rules of argumentative writing, encouraging them to understand how authors organize their claims to develop a line of reasoning.
- Discuss typical parts of an argumentative text and encourage students to identify them in their writing (e.g., context, significance, counterarguments, rebuttals, supporting points, and solutions or conclusions).
- Help students translate an author's argument into their own words to confirm their understanding.
- Practice looking at both claims and counterclaims, reminding them that a good argument will typically acknowledge, and try to refute, counterarguments.
- Practice offering a justification for how or why specific information from a source advances or does not advance the author's argument. Students need to provide more than a statement indicating that a source is relevant or that a source supports a claim. Students must evaluate ***how or why*** specific information does or does not support the overall argument.
- Explain the difference between pieces of evidence and sources and practice having students evaluate them in tandem with one another.
- Remind students that credibility of evidence must be assessed both in terms of its source and the way specific information from a source supports the author's argument.

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- Discussions on credibility should focus on the sources (beyond “John Doe teaches at X University”). Practice asking ***how or why*** the source of information influences the weight it has in whether the reader might accept or reject the author's argument.
- Discussions on relevance often focus on evidence. Remind students to be explicit when explaining how well specific pieces of evidence support a claim and/or the main argument.
- Practice evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of specific pieces of evidence.
- Practice reverse outlining and annotating student responses that scored high on each row to analyze how each skill is showcased for each question.

What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare for the skills being assessed in Part A?

- Practice with prompts from earlier years (available on AP Central and in AP Classroom Question Bank).
- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model high-scoring responses.
- Use the optional online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and exemplify the requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily Video in AP Classroom “End-of-Course Exam Video 1”.

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End-of-Course Exam, Part B

Task: Read four short stimulus pieces, identifying a theme, and develop an argument, drawing support from at least two of those four sources.
Topic: Synthesis Essay

	Max Points:	Mean Score:
Establish Argument	6	4.49
Establish Argument	6	4.10
Select and Use Evidence	6	3.98
Apply Conventions	6	4.11

Overall Mean Score: 16.67

What were the responses to this question expected to demonstrate?

This question assessed students' ability to:

- Read the sources critically, understanding the different perspective of each source.
- Identify a theme or issue connecting the provided sources.
- Use the theme as an impetus for writing a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well-crafted argument presenting the student's perspective.
- Incorporate two or more of the sources to support the newly developed argument.
- Build the argument with a series of logical claims.
- Link claims to supporting evidence.
- Cite sources, identifying them either by author or by letters assigned in the prompt.
- Complete the task within a 90-minute time period.

What common student misconceptions or gaps in knowledge or skills were seen in the responses to this question?

Responses that Demonstrated Common Misconceptions/Gaps in Skills:	*Responses that Demonstrated Understanding:*
Creating and Supporting an Argument: Rubric Rows 1 and 2	
• Failed to state a clear position/thesis statement/argument, or asked a question as a thesis, which was not answered. (R1) "Sources B and D both provide the idea of how each gerations historical context is inflence by the pass generations." OR "What is power? What can you with the power that you have?" • Stated a thematic connection without offering a perspective or argument of their own. (R1) These responses frequently begin or end with a general overview, such as, "A comon theme I could use for these 2 sources is how the word power is important for all to know and how it has importance to the poeple."	• Identified a broad thematic connection, such as the importance of power, to contextualize the student's perspective and then swiftly transitioned to a more focused argument that supported an original or insightful perspective. (R1) • Offered an argument that synthesized the perspectives of two or more sources. For example, a response was inspired by sources A and D to make the argument that the redistribution of generational power can lead to a more balanced and equal society. (R1)

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• Selected a topic tangentially related to a theme from the sources but had their own agenda (IWA, IRR, or a paper written for another course) and forced the provided sources to support strained arguments largely unconnected to those sources. (R1) • Articulated a thesis but failed to build an argument moving from claim to claim. (R2) • Began each body paragraph, "Source X says." Sometimes responses worked inductively to make an argument, but more often than not, students went on to summarize the source. (R2) • Failed to provide commentary on the evidence, leaving the reader to make assumptions about its relevance. (R2) • Failed to link evidence to specific claims in the argument. (R2)	• Allowed the source materials to inspire an original idea in the time allotted. For example, "Some may argue that age limits for members of government would be harmful because they restrict the experience possessed by officials. However, because a majority of political power is concentrated among the elderly, this results in ineffective power. Therefore, strict age limits for members of the government should be enacted in order to benefit society." (R1) • Crafted a thoughtful, arguable thesis. For example, "When humans age and become older, their power is more likely to grow in comparison to when they were younger. This increase in power comes from growth in relationships, enhanced maturity, and increased knowledge." (R1) • Organized the response in an effective manner to support the line of reasoning. (R2) • Employed transitions to guide the reader from claim to claim in the line of reasoning. Readers knew exactly what the student was attempting to argue. (R2) • Interpreted evidence by exploring implications, limitations, and/or counterarguments. (R2) • Reminded the readers about the central claim throughout the response, linking different pieces of evidence to the overarching argument. (R2)
Using Sources: Rubric Row 3	
• Demonstrated a superficial reading of the provided sources: "Sources B and D both provide the idea of how each genrations historical context is inflence by the pass generations." • Used the argument from only one source in the packet. As an example, younger generations lack power in society. (Source D) • Forced the provided sources to support strained arguments largely unconnected to those sources.	• Demonstrated a careful reading of the sources, recognizing them as distinct voices in a complicated discussion. • Were deliberate in choosing sources and specific segments of text that supported their arguments. • Strategically selected and synthesized perspectives and information from the sources to support a compelling argument. This synthesis could take place within paragraphs or in the argument as a whole:

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• Forced all four provided sources into their arguments. For example, a response that started with a reasonable argument about historical changes in women's access to power using Sources B and C, tried unsuccessfully to incorporate commentary on Source D. • Misread or misinterpreted the provided sources: ▪ Many students misunderstood or misused the poem "Power" by simply dropping a line into the response out of context. ▪ Many students misrepresented Source B by cherry-picking quotations ("Shoulder pads are about being visible and taking up space." OR "From there nightgowns to thier power suits, padded shoulder pads were never in short supply.") without providing explanation to connect the evidence to the claim or argument.	▪ Students compared Sources B and C to explore the concept of women's empowerment. ▪ Students could also pair Sources A and C to discuss the harms of individual power.
Applying Conventions	
• Had not been edited or revised. • Paid little attention to word choice. • Used source material without quotation marks, introductions, or parenthetical citations. Frequently "dropped" quotations from the source material without integrating material into the student's own writing. • Had substantial grammar issues that impeded readability.	• Used grammar and syntax that enhanced the argument. • Wrote in an academic style, choosing words carefully to elevate the response. • Skillfully attributed, cited, or embedded source material. Many students incorporated source material with meaningful discussions of the author, time, place, or genre.

What advice would you offer to teachers to help their students improve their skills on this task?

Consider explicitly teaching the task directions for EOC Exam, Part B.

> The directions begin by asking students to "read carefully…, focusing on a theme." Some students are seeing this first task as part of their written response; they write one, two, sometimes three paragraphs exploring the theme.
>
> If the tasks for this prompt were numbered, this would simply be task number 1: Read and think. Ask students to annotate the sources during this phase of the assessment. The student should not begin typing their response until this step is complete. In other words, responses should begin with the student's argument, **not** an extended discussion of theme, such as, "*A common theme among the sources is X. Source A was about … which connects to the theme by … and Source B was about … which connects to the theme by …*" The sources should not act as the student's voice.

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Once students have "spoken" with all of the sources, they are prepared to take their own position. They are ready for task number 2: Plan and outline. They should do this to be prepared to "Write a logically organized, well-reasoned, and well written argument that presents your own perspective on the theme or issue."

Now that students have an argument in mind, they should carefully choose at least two of the provided sources as support. Those sources must be relevant and actually support the claim(s) being made. (Students also grapple with this concept in EOC, Part A. Students struggle to determine whether evidence is relevant or not.) Students can reverse this process as well; for example, they may begin the process by finding two arguments from sources that speak to one another. Students can then build their own argument in order to join that conversation. Caution students that a response that summarizes arguments made in two sources and then concludes with a line or two presenting their personal perspective will not score well.

Only once students have an outline of their claims and supporting evidence should they do task number 3: Write a well-reasoned argument.

It is important to help students understand that the best responses move beyond a claim made by one of the sources, such as, "Power, is, first of all, a capacity—it is the potential to achieve specific outcomes." Many responses identified a topic, such as power, which was discussed by more than one source. The most successful responses went a step further to establish an argument that connected the sources but occurred in none of them. For example, some students discussed the power that social media has to influence political campaigns. Alternatively, a response discussed how school uniforms can instill a sense of power and accomplishment, while boosting self-confidence in students.

Other suggestions:

- Use the Scoring Guidelines to target specific skills to teach students. Ensure that students understand how their response will be scored using the rubric.
- Provide students ample opportunities in class to practice entering into conversations that synthesize multiple arguments. Teachers could begin with small student groups made up of members who have differing opinions on a subject. Then consider moving on to synthesize arguments from various texts.
- Practice writing commentary. Teach students to see commentary as an action: Interpret. It is not a passive process. It is not a summary. Students should address implications, limitations, and/or objections.
- Though students must read all four sources, please ask them to be discerning when choosing source material to support their own arguments.
- Teach students to identify the genre of a source and the conventions of that genre. Students should be taught to avoid direct comparisons of sources that follow different conventions and expectations. Works of fiction and poetry, for example, should not be used as evidence in the same manner that one uses academic research or news articles.
- Help students discern the difference between the author of a source and a source cited by the author. Students need to properly attribute the sources cited within any given source.
- Practice effective integration of source material into arguments.
- Teach students to use paragraphs with transitional words or phrases. Use professional writers who write argumentatively as models.
- Encourage students to proofread their work.

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What resources would you recommend to teachers to better prepare for the skills being assessed in Part B?

- Practice with prompts from earlier years (available on AP Central and in AP Classroom Question Bank).
- Work through student samples and commentaries on AP Central to model high-scoring responses.
- Use the online Professional Learning modules for teachers (accessible through AP Classroom>Course Resources>Overview) to help clarify and exemplify the requirements of the rubric.
- Use AP Daily Video in AP Classroom "End-of-Course Exam Video 2."

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